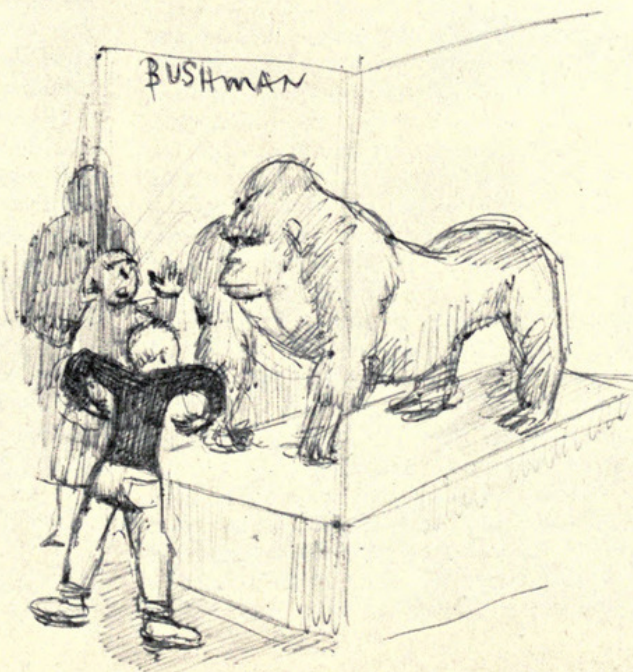


**MUSEUM
VIEWS**
.... and viewpoints

by MARION PAHL
MUSEUM ILLUSTRATOR



CLIMBING TO THE FLAMING CRATER OF IZALCO

BY SHARAT KUMAR ROY
CHIEF CURATOR OF GEOLOGY

A RECENT ARTICLE in the *New York Times* (December 8, 1956), under the heading "Erupting Volcano in Salvador Filmed Up Close by Scientists," reminded me of my participation in the climbing of the same volcano six years ago and prompted me to draft a letter to the editor as follows:

Dear Sir:

Referring to the opening paragraph of your report: "For the first time in memory, the active volcano of Izalco, in western Salvador, has been scaled and its flaming

through one of the lesser fumarolic areas of El Salvador (base of volcano San Vicente). Within a matter of seconds, notwithstanding shoes and socks, it was so severely burnt that I had to be carried away. I, therefore, believe that Tazieff and his five companions have accomplished a singular feat, all the more because the party climbed the volcano after midnight in the darkness of a waning last-quarter moon. I made my ascent from the northeast flank, N 10° E, shortly after sunrise, in broad daylight, which gave me the advantage of avoiding loose rocks and fumaroles. The going, especially the last 100 meters, became so steep that I had to

Tazieff and the entire group for a well-nigh unparalleled achievement.

Very sincerely,
Sharat K. Roy
Chief Curator of Geology

In connection with my attempts to climb Izalco and my final success I wrote to the Director of the Museum from San Salvador on July 27, 1951:

Since writing to you last I have made three attempts to climb the Izalco, each time from a different direction with little success. Day before yesterday (Wednesday) I approached it from the southwest side under the protection of an adventitious cone and reached 4,830', but that's all. Next Sunday I shall make my last attempt from the NE side. I am leaving tomorrow morning to spend the night at Las Brumas in a finca, which is about three miles from the base of the volcano, then start out to climb at dawn. I doubt if I shall make it; it is a formidable task. If the volcano were quiet, I wouldn't be so doubtful. She is throwing up all sorts of obnoxious junk, two or three times an hour, and it is impossible to predict where the debris will fall.

Sunday 9:30 p.m.

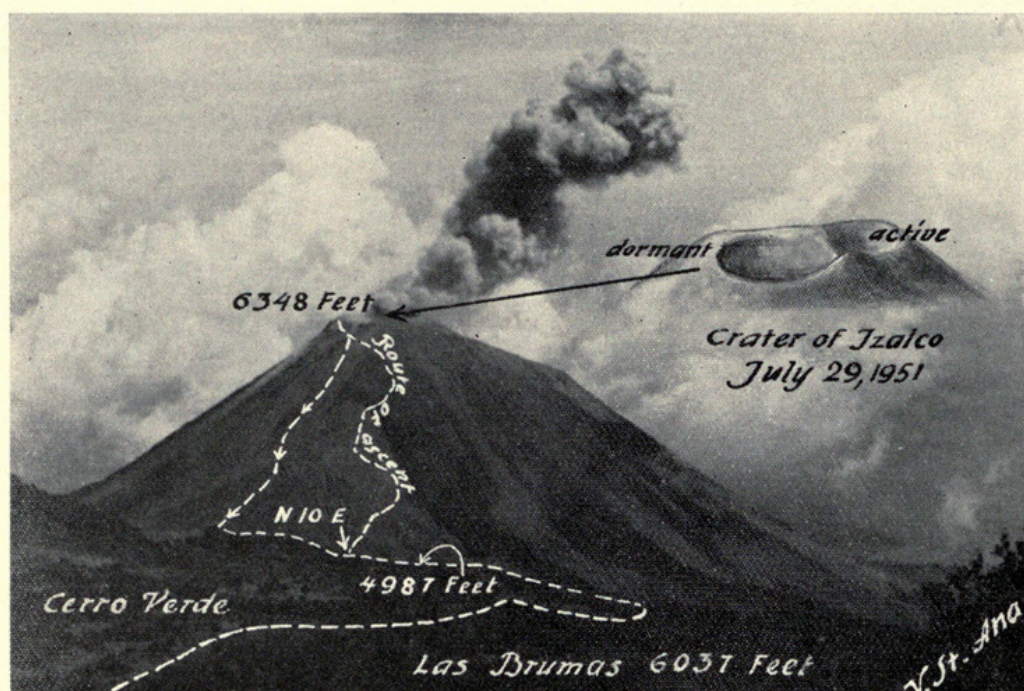
Well, Sir, I did it. Came back at about 6:15 P.M. and I have been talking to the fellows ever since. It's a grand and satisfying feeling. I made a trial climb as soon as I got to Las Brumas at about 3:15 P.M., and I knew then that I would do it, but I was so tense that I did not have a wink of sleep. In retrospect, it is not as formidable as I was given to understand, or as I myself thought it to be. I had a couple of bad moments, but that was to be expected and I was prepared for it. Only two real casualties: lost the barometer and my leather gloves that I inherited from Uncle Sam during my sojourn in Greenland, serving not in the Infantry, but the more envied U.S.A.A.F.!

I am really much too tired to write more about it. Actually, I did not have to scale it. I had all the essential data of the volcano. It's the mule in me that kept on urging me to have a peep into the crater.

It's raining harder than ever. The abandoned house at the finca where I slept last night had numerous pigeons cooing from the eaves of the tile roof; chickens and pigs coming in and out at will as a matter of curiosity; rats having their usual family reunions; and lastly, a dead pup was lying a couple of feet from my hammock. I did not know his state until morning. All these in one room, which did not have any window, but the door was kept open either for ventilation, or for the convenience of the guests I have just recounted.

With kind regards
Most sincerely,
Sharat

P.S. Rand [Dr. Austin Rand, Chief Curator of Zoology] will be interested in the



VOLCAN IZALCO IN WESTERN EL SALVADOR

Dr. Sharat K. Roy ascended this volcano, which is the most active in the Western Hemisphere, on July 29, 1951, by the route indicated above. On reaching the summit, he found two craters separated by a low wall. One of the craters was dormant, the other active. The latter was a frightening, bottomless pit in which swirled masses of black clouds, burning gases, and liquid lava that rose and fell and spattered.

crater observed and photographed at close range," I may take the liberty to say that I scaled Izalco on July 29, 1951. The eruptive activity of the volcano, at that time, was very much the same as it is today except that there were fewer fumarolic areas around and below the crater-rim than today. This I know from personal experience. I have made numerous trips to Izalco since 1950. My last one was barely eight weeks ago, October 19, 1956. From what I observed then, I did not believe that it was physically possible to reach the crater, much less spend twenty minutes on its rim, as did Haroum Tazieff and his party. It appeared to me that the numerous steaming and glowing cracks all around the northeast-northwest side of the crater and its approaches created a temperature condition that no living being could withstand.

Only three years ago, my right foot broke

sit down with my back to the volcano and push myself upward with my feet. It took me an hour and forty-five minutes to reach the edge of the dormant crater. There I stretched my neck over its rim and saw the active crater to my right—a hissing, swirling mass of black clouds tinged with flaming gases and spattering lava. It was a frightening spectacle and I was terrified. I turned and went down by a shorter route, a gully-like cut filled with pyroclastics of varying size. Izalco erupted once when I had covered about a fourth of the distance and twice during my descent, but I was far enough down then to enable me to avoid falling rocks except the ashes.

It was a challenge that I wanted to take. I learned only a little, but I did see an active crater, the condition of which changes at frequent intervals. Once again I wish to express my admiration and congratulate

Izalco trip. We, rather I, used to pester him about it.

S.R.

The Director was away on vacation when my letter arrived. I received the following answer from the Deputy Director:

Muy Estimado Señor Doctor Roy:

Your letter to Colonel Gregg arrived after he had left on vacation at the end of the month. However, I shall send it on to him at Maple Knoll Farm, where he will be until the seventeenth of August. The news of your spectacular climb is spreading. Rand was delighted to learn of your accomplishment. From my point of view, living at the finca you describe was a greater feat than climbing Izalco! . . .

Sincerely,
John R. Millar
Deputy Director

E. E. HAND—

(Continued from page 3)

Japanese shell fauna that had become known to science in its fullness only in recent times through the efforts of that able and indefatigable collector, Yoichiro Hirase in Kyoto.

Miss LaVerne Hand, daughter of our collector, recently wrote me that her father was "a family man and seemed never happier than when arranging a group of shells for mounting in small boxes or watch cases." Indeed, a great portion of his collection was brilliantly arranged, the shells being displayed so well that they were safe from touch and yet all their interesting features as well as their intrinsic beauty were perfectly visible.

After Mr. Hand's death on March 30, 1937, his daughter brought the collection back to Chicago and stored it until, in the spring of 1956, she planned to move to Grant's Pass, Oregon. She then decided that Chicago Natural History Museum was the most logical place to assure the usefulness of her father's shells. Thus, through Miss Hand's perspicacity, this Museum has come into possession of an extremely rich and important collection.

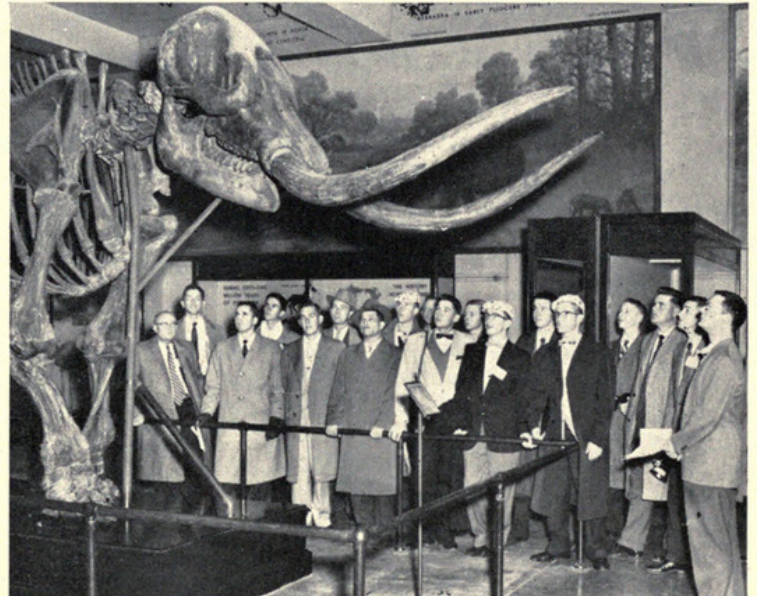
A BIG JOB

When the forty large boxes containing the collection arrived in the Museum, a task of real magnitude began. The thousands and thousands of individual lots had to be unpacked as cautiously as Miss Hand had packed them. Each lot, when unwrapped, had to be transferred into the Museum's standard types of boxes, vials, and other containers. Miss Hand had spent several weeks in preparing her father's collection for transport, and now it took the Museum crew several months to process the treasures for reference use. The contents of the forty crates included some 6,500 lots of valuable material, aggregating about 150,000 indi-

BOYS AND GIRLS OF 4-H ON MUSEUM VISIT



Above: Alighting from buses that brought them to Museum for their annual visit is the first group of approximately 300 girls, delegates from all over the United States and Canada to the National 4-H Club Congress recently held in Chicago. Right: A group of 4-H boys and their leaders pause to study a mastodon while touring the Museum during their Chicago visit. David Techter (extreme right), Assistant in Fossil Vertebrates, had charge of 600 4-H boys.



vidual shells. Many of the species in the Hand collection were new to us, but even those already represented in the Museum are of special interest because of the localities whence they came.

Some of the Chicago-area localities in which Mr. Hand collected have changed to such an extent that now they are almost destitute of mollusk life. Therefore many of Hand's specimens possess historical value.

The Joliet region is well covered by the Hand collection, providing thus another Illinois area that has been adequately studied with respect to its mollusk fauna. While traveling in Colorado, Hand and Ferriss discovered a land snail that sub-

sequently was described as *Oreohelix handi* by Henry Augustus Pilsbry and Ferriss. Specimens of this rare species are included in the Museum's new acquisition.

This sketch indicates the scientific importance of the Hand collection. Chicago Natural History Museum is indeed indebted to Miss LaVerne Hand, who so wisely has made possible the use for research of her father's valuable assemblage of shells. The Museum will make this treasured collection available to laymen as well as to scientists. In recognition of her notable gift, the Museum's Board of Trustees has elected Miss Hand a Contributor—special Membership classification for outstanding donors.



Roy, Sharat Kumar. 1957. "Climbing to the Flaming Crater of Izalco." *Bulletin* 28(1), 6–7.

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